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THE  
COTTAGE:  
A  
NOVEL.







THE  
COTTAGE;  
A  
NOVEL:

In a SERIES of LETTERS.

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By MISS MINIFIE,  
Author of BARFORD-ABBEY.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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VOL. III.

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L O N D O N :

Printed for T. DURHAM, Charing-Cross; G. KEARSLEY,  
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THE  
GOTTAGE  
A  
NOVEL

In a Series of Letters

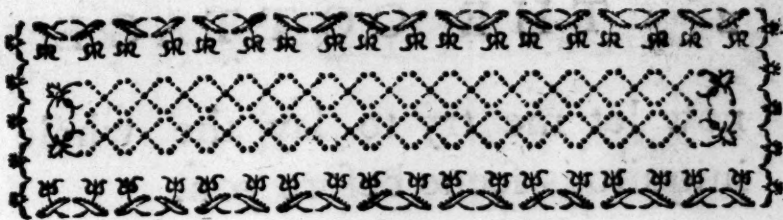
By Miss M. I. F. B.  
Author of "Barford House"

IN THREE VOLUMES



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1799.



T H E  
C O T T A G E.



L E T T E R XXI.

From the same to the same.



ALL the black deeds are  
out. Hell cannot furnish  
such a train of guilt.—

But remember, observe  
what I say, not a word of this to  
my Jamima. Now let me begin,

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B

now

## 2 THE COTTAGE.

now let me try to lay the whole iniquitous scene before you.

Something past nine, Monday evening, when I arrived at L——, a town not fix miles distant from Newton hall, thinking it too late to proceed there that evening, I ordered my servants to be ready the next morning at ten.

In a hack chaise, at the hour I mentioned, I sat out, attended only by William; on the business I was going, I considered this precaution necessary.

Very little less than half an hour before the chaise stopped, not twenty yards from the house, at a large iron gate; seeing a great clumsy



## THE COTTAGE. 3

clumsy oaf, in livery, standing near, I asked if his master was at home? I believe so, Sir, he replied, that is, if you mean my young master; ay—ay, your young master I returned, but don't give yourself the trouble, honest friend, to let him know he is enquired for, I will step in with you; I saw the fellow staring and taking up his great clumsy legs, to run post, which made me use this caution.

Determined not to lose sight of my conductor, I followed him through several passages, often repeating, as I proceeded, pray shew me to your master; the fellow frequently looking over his shoulder, as if he was half afraid to obey my commands.



I wish you could have seen the guilty wretches when the door opened, and I moved towards them; their accusation stamped in every feature of my face.

Can you conceive how the vixen and her son were employed?—Certainly you cannot, neither can you suppose their minds were tuned to assist them in any amusement. No, my dear Osborne, it must be a mind all innocence,—a mind like my Jamima's,—a mind like lady Susan's, or your dear, your amiable sister's, that can send forth rational entertainments. If all is not peace within, every thing must be irksome, — every thing stupid without.

A propos, don't you recollect, after Sir John W— decoyed away poor Sally Moses from her honest parents—don't you recollect what an altered man he was when next we saw him? I think you and I were together at his rooms, when he complained how heavy time hung on his hands, that the days were grown so confounded long, he did not know what to do with himself.—I wish, said I, Sir John, I could borrow some of those superfluous hours you complain of,—why don't you amuse yourself with books, you used to be fond of reading? Damn the books, he replied, I take up twenty in a day, but never read more than a page in each.—Musick, Sir John, sure you never can be tired of that;—

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Rot musick, I am grown sick of it.—Painting then?—Worse and worse, why I can't sit still five minutes in one place, for the universe.

What a charming neighbour Sir John would have been for Mr. Abington!—Sweet company for each other;—happy reflections,—good humour, with now and then the rational entertainment of picking their nails, and whistling in chorus, why they would have been the envy of the whole county.

Really, and upon my word, this was the worthy Mr. Abington's employ, when I entered;—picking his nails, and whistling. I fancy, thought I, glancing my eye over his  
his



## THE COTTAGE. 7

his ill-looking phiz, I shall make you whistle another tune; and you, madam, who sit so very composedly, mending your old scraps of china,—I suppose you see the look I gave her, such a look; Frank, that she swept her ragged work, materials, altogether, into her apron, leaving the room as if she had been running from her infernal master.

Being seated in a chair ungracefully drawn for me, by the pitiful wretch, I accosted him as near as I can recollect, in the following manner:

I imagine, Sir, you are a stranger both to my person and family, perhaps you may think it odd I

B 4

should

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should intrude without first acquainting you with my name;— You had a relation, Mr. Abington, some years since, in this house,— likely you have heard her speak of a Mr. Darnel; here the villain began to tremble.

What — who — what — what —  
what a miss — miss — miss?

To be sure you remember the name of your cousin, Mr. Abington; this I spoke with a sneer that cut his very soul.

Oh, yes, Sir,—I remember my cousin, I remember—I know who you mean, my—my—my—believe me, the serpent could not hiss out her name.

Your



## THE COTTAGE. 9

Your cousin Jamima, I suppose you would say, Sir,—she was a fine young lady, Mr. Abington,—pray what is become of her?

I know nothing about her, Sir,—I—I—I have not seen her these two years, I—I—don't know.

I thought you was to have married her, Sir,—I thought she had been determined to think and act consistent with her duty;—some of his own cursed words in the forged letter.

I know nothing about her, Sir,—indeed, Sir,—I—I—but I will call my mother, perhaps—likely—for any thing I know, she can tell you; at the same time, starting

from his seat, and running towards the door.

But you must not go, Mr. Abington, I replied, following him close,—you must not go, I have business of importance with you; seeing him resolved, I caught hold of the flap of his coat, by God you shall not go, and I pulled him head foremost to the other end of the room;—recovering his feet, he flew to the bell, ringing it with such force, that in an instant, in ran the old vixen, followed by three of her servants.

Scarce was she within the door, than her son roared out, he had narrowly escaped with his life, swearing that I attempted to murder him,

at

## THE COTTAGE. 11

at the same time calling to the servants without, to come to his assistance.

Well knowing what a crew I was with, I drew my sword from the scabbard, and laying it very composedly on the table, protested the first person that dared to insult me, should have it in his heart.—Observing the sword, and the determined manner in which I spoke, those without the door, chose to retire, and, I suppose, prevented the rest from coming to their master's assistance.

The old woman now began to roar like a lioness,—her son exclaiming, I was a ruffian and an assassin.

B 6

Let



Let them roar on, thought I; I heeded them not, but slid to the door, threw it fast, turned the key, and put it into my pocket — Never was any poor man's ears so assailed; — such howls, — such horrid screams, I really expected every thing from the termagant's fury, as to her coward son, I knew his fire would soon be exhausted.

Calm as if two lambs had been playing by my side, I sat myself down, began to examine my pistols, — took out the forged letter, and laid both the letter and pistols on the table, close to my sword. — The apparatus thus before me, I stood up, and darting fury from my eyes, now, villain, said I, advance. — View what lays here, — observe,

observe, you guilty wretch, pointing to the letter, observe—see how your black deeds stare you in the face. — Come forward, I repeat, the duke of Lester stands ready to chastise you.

In one moment,—nay, in less than a moment, the dastards lay at my feet;—they attempted to take my hands,—they begged,—they howled,—they looked up to heaven, I saw they would have prayed, but could not.

Here my Jamima's sufferings stood ranged before me, or compassion for the kneeling miscreants would have sent me away with the work half done.

Do



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Do you entreat me to forgive you, looking sternly at them?—Me, whom you have robbed of happiness?—Me, whom you have robbed of an angel?—No—go to her,—go to the relation that lies bleeding by your wounds,—go to her, I say,—go, lest she should appear against you at the great tribunal.

This forgery, young man, is not all you have to answer for;—the will—the will by which you enjoy your uncle's fortune;—by all that's sacred, I believe that was forged; Mr. Edward Abington never died with that will, he was not the man to nurse up an infant in his bosom, and then leave her indigent; by  
all

all that's holy, I will come at the truth.

By this time the wretches had left their suppliant posture, and were now groaning instead of howling.

Speak, said I, I am not to be trifled with?—Say what attorney made this will?—Not one word—not one word could I get from either, till I swore, if they did not give me the satisfaction I required—if they did not immediately confess who made the will, I would shew them no mercy;—You had better, I continued, — you had much better trust to my generosity, than be called before a court of justice, where you have nothing  
to

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to expect, but that the utmost rigour of the law will be put in execution against you. See the witness of your crimes, pointing to the letter, that will be sufficient,—that will stop every tongue, and deafen every ear in your defence.

The old woman again, all rage, exclaimed, is your grace so very cruel? But do your worst, coming up to me, trembling with fury,—I defy you, now—Yes, I defy you. The will was not forged, Mr. Y— wrote it with his own hand, and my dear brother signed it before witnesses.

So you defy me, madam?—Pray does your son defy me too, looking stark at him?



I won't give you the satisfaction, returned he, to say whether I do or not;—What if you are a duke?

You have no aversion, I presume, young man, to the smell of sulphur, pray take one of these pistols, you have looked at them long enough to know which is your choice.

Damn you, and your pistols too, he returned; before I could take one of them in my hand, he sprang to the window, lifted up the sash, and flew away like lightening.—You will believe I found no inclination to follow him, no—no, I had other matters in view.

With-

Without speaking, or so much as looking at my female companion, I replaced the forged letter in my pocket book, — put my sword in the scabbard, and taking a pistol in each hand, ran to the chaise that waited for me without the gate.

A few minutes brought me to the inn I came from in the morning, when, sending for the man of the house, I asked if he knew an attorney of the name of Y—? He answered in the affirmative, that he lived but a small distance from the town, — was a mighty civil gentleman, and had more business than half the attorneys in twenty miles of the place.

Pray,



Pray, said I, is he not employed in the Abington family? Oh, yes, and please your honour, I have heard him say, the squire's family sends for him on all occasions. —Get me fresh horses instantly, I replied, and direct the drivers to his house.

Quick as thought, I resumed my seat in the carriage,—and in much less time than I was coming from the hall, I found myself in a little village, where, on an ascent at the further end, stood the house of this famed lawyer.

William according to the directions I gave him, rapped at the door, and was informed by a woman servant, that her master had been  
gone

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gone out near half an hour, but that she expected him home every minute; then advancing to the chaise, she desired I would alight, —she believed Mr. Y— was very near, and would call him immediately.

Bidding the drivers wait, I followed the girl to a little parlour, as she called it, just within the door, — where I remained whilst she went in pursuit of her master.

I was employed in examining the prints that ornamented the white walls of this room, amongst which hung his present majesty,— the lord chancellor in his robes,— the industrious and idle apprentice, with many others that engaged my

attention, when behold the door opened, and after twenty bows—and twenty times scraping his shoes on a bit of painted canvas, this very civil gentleman advanced with a—who is it I have the honour to address?

After I had informed him—what his grace of Lester, with a bow that almost made his little bushy wig sweep the ground? Have I the honour of this great personage under my roof? And drawing a chair next the fire, which he humbly besought I would occupy, he began to unbutton his coat, displaying a flaming scarlet waistcoat, bound with gold edging.

Mr.



Mr. Y—, said I, after we were seated, my business with you is concerning Mr. Edward Abington's will;—you was the person I have heard who drew it.

Oh, yes, and please your grace, with a simper of consequence, I do all the business for that family.

And you are certain, Sir, the will proved by his nephew, in Doctor's Commons, was the identical will of Mr. Edward Abington.

Very certain,—very sure, in a solemn voice, but much agitated.

Well,



Well, Mr. Y—, you will pardon a few questions, I shall ask concerning this matter, I am interested in it.—The lady who is disinherited by that will, is soon to be duchess of Lester.

Ah — with much surprize! Is my old acquaintance, miss Jamima, going to be so honoured? No doubt your grace is very noble minded: —pale as death, and ready to sink from his chair, the whole time he was speaking.

Miss Abington, Sir, would honour the first man on earth with her alliance; but this is not to the purpose; in a few weeks, Mr. Y—, in a very few weeks, you will be called upon in a public court

court of justice;—every servant,—every dependant, in short, Mr. Y—, every person in, or concerned with this family, will be subpœna'd to give their evidence.

Very well, my lord duke,—very well, with an assumed air of innocence, through which the villain might visibly be traced, I am not at all afraid to appear in court;—my character, and please your grace, is too well known to be impeached of fraudulent acts.—Your grace, no doubt, is at liberty to proceed in any suit you think fit.

I know I am, Mr. Y—, and by heaven and earth, if I do discover the villainy I suspect, the perpetrators

traitors of it shall not go unpunished.

If I am not too bold, I should be glad to know what it is your grace suspects.

I'll tell you, Sir,—I suspect either the will now in the Commons, a forged one,—or I suspect, Mr. Y—, riveting my eyes on him, supposing that will should not be forged, it was only penned in a passion. Perhaps, by the instigation of his infernal nephew, and that he made another before his death.—Do you understand me Mr. Y—?

Yes,—yes,—raising his voice a little, I understand, but how will  
Vol. III. C your



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your grace come at the truth of this matter, allowing it should be as you suggest?

How come at the truth of it?—  
Oh, there are ways and means, Mr. Y—, to bring all such dark dealings to the open light. — I saw what the fellow was at;—I saw he was a gaping fish, and I baited the hook well. —Gold, —Gold, Sir,—Gold is the dust that I shall scatter.

No doubt your grace has sufficient of that, looking as if he could have crept into my pocket;—no doubt your grace is in the right to support all lawful claims.

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I am not a mercenary man, Mr. Y—, I want not fortune; had miss Abington been a stranger to me, and I had discovered the injury she had received, as sure as you and I live, it should have been redressed. —But, as you, Mr. Y—, can give me no insight into this affair, I must carry my pursuits farther; getting up as if to take my leave.

Your grace had better sit a few minutes longer, entreating to lay down my hat, perhaps I may consider of some little circumstance that may be of service; here he hem'd two or three times.

Well, Mr. Y—, if you can acquaint me with any thing relative to the purpose I am bent on, you

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shall not go unrewarded.—Again he put on one of his detested simpers.

Why to be sure I should be glad to serve your grace, but I always like to keep myself out of scrapes. You know my lord duke, there is something very delicate in the character of an attorney.—I sat attentive, I forbade even my eyes to interrupt him.—I don't know, he continued, what to say to all this, it is dangerous to intermeddle where property and character are both concerned.—Mr. Thomas Abington inherits his uncle's fortune, if your grace thinks he inherits it wrongfully, no doubt your measures are right, but what would become of the people, suppose



## THE COTTAGE. 29

pose such could be found that were accessory to the undoing the young Mr. Abington?—The squire and please your grace, is very revengeful, he will part with his soul sooner than his estates.

That, Mr. Y—, he has parted with long ago; he gave it to the devil in exchange for those very estates you speak of.

That is a hard sentence—your grace must pardon me, I think there is a great price set on the souls of men; but my neighbours all tell me, I have too much charity for one of this world.

I dispute not your good qualities, Mr. Y—, no doubt you have

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many, but my time at present is so precious, it will not admit to hear them enumerated.—I shall be very plain and very concise, Mr. Y—, in what I am going to say.—I saw the man—if I had not taken this method, he would have held me by the ear till night.

Now, Sir, observe, and I put on a look to make him comprehend my meaning;—are you or are you not determined to keep me your friend? I can plainly perceive you know all the iniquitous proceedings, therefore if you frankly confess of what nature, I have before hinted how I shall deal with those who help me to the discovery; if not, your character, which you are pleased

## THE COTTAGE. 31

pleased to say is so delicate, must stand the test of a public court.

It was more than a minute before he could summon resolution, when rising from his seat, creeping rather than walking, he whispered me, miss Abington, my lord duke, —see the confidence I place in your grace; miss Abington is the lawful heir of her uncle. I declare, though I suspected it, the villain made me start.

For once, Mr. Y—, recollecting myself—for once you are an honest man;—don't be afraid, for I saw him look at the door—at the window, and the very walls, as if he



feared they could hear what he was about to discover.

I am your friend, Mr. Y—; I am a man of honour; you shall not be betrayed, only help me to the clue, I will find means to unravel the mischief.

If your grace will really promise I shall not be injured by the discovery—if you will promise to insure me from all damages on that account, I will not only lay open the whole affair, but I will put your grace in a method how to proceed.

What you require, Mr. Y—, shall faithfully be observed;—believe

lieve me, even in pecuniary matters, you shall find your advantage in giving up the villain you have been injudiciously drawn in to serve.—You shall henceforth command the man who never yet prostituted his word.

Your grace has satisfied me, I require nothing more, only permit me to order your carriage and servants from the door; the young squire perhaps may take it into his head to call here before our business is ended; he rides this way most days, and as I shall commission my servant to say I am not at home, it will be impolitic for a carriage to be seen so near my house.

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The scheme being immediately put in execution, at his request, we adjourned to a room detached from the road. Now prepare to hear, as I said before, the most iniquitous proceedings ever brought to light, but as it is too late this evening to give you the whole, I will send what I have wrote, by the post now going out.—Don't forget to send Robert to meet me on the road, nothing but death shall detain me after Thursday; write how my Jamima looks—how she speaks,—if she remembers to take her medicines,—if she is come down into the little room,—if she has had a return of the pain in her side;  
write



# THE COTTAGE. 35

write every thing, I want to be  
informed.

Yours,

My dear Osborne,

LESTER

## LETTER XXI.

From the same to the same.

**Y**OU recollect where I dropped my pen—You recollect we were adjourned to a room detached from the road.—You must now listen to Mr. Y—.

Some two or three years since—  
I very well remember, it happened on a Wednesday, I was sent for in great haste to Newton-hall; the servant who came to fetch me, said I must ride for my life, that his master had been seized with a fit of apoplexy, and though tolerably

bly recovered from that, Mrs. Abington apprehended he would soon be attacked again.

Suspecting he wanted to make some alteration in his will, I mounted my horse, and made great speed towards the hall;—On my enquiring of the servants who saw me alight, how their master did, they answered, he had been out of the fit near an hour, and, they thanked God, fallen into a sweet sleep.—Mrs. Abington, I suppose, hearing my voice, ran to the door, telling me what a sad fright they had all been in, and how glad she was I happened to be at home when the messenger arrived.—Don't disturb the good gentleman, madam, I replied;—I will wait  
till



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till you see a convenient opportunity to mention my being in the house.

Very right, Mr. Y—, giving me a nod of approbation, I am doubly cautious at this time; do what I can, I suppose his niece will reflect.

How can she reflect, madam, when she is on the spot?

That is not the case, Mr. Y—, Jamima is at Bath; my poor dear brother throws away a deal of money upon that girl; happy for us all he has now thought of a method to keep his estate in the Abington family. She was proceeding, when her son entered to acquaint

acquaint her his uncle had been awake some minutes; — that he found himself much refreshed, and added he, very composed.—Come then, Mr. Y—, said Mrs. Abington, the sooner we go to him the better, and rising from her seat, I followed her to the poor gentleman's apartment; — how do you find yourself now brother, she asked, as she approached the bed? And in a voice something lower, pronounced my name; — is he here, I heard him say? — Yes, Sir, he is just come, she replied, beckoning me forward.

Oh, Mr. Y—, cried the poor gentleman as I drew near him, I have been very ill, — I never expected to see the morning.—Come, said

said I, in a jocular manner, perceiving his spirits to be very low, you are worth a hundred dead people,—Mr. Abington, you must not cast yourself down.

Why I hope I shall recover this bout, Mr. Y—; it would be a dreadful thing to die without seeing my Jamima.—Mrs. Abington I observed, looked a little peevish when he said this, and I heard her mutter something about infatuation.

Mr. Abington, not seeming to observe what passed, said to me as I sat close to his pillow, Mr. Y—, I was thinking about some alterations in my will, one ought to endeavour at peace;—my last will  
you



you know is not agreeable to all my relations; but as I find myself better, I believe I shall defer it till my niece returns from Bath.

Oh, my dear brother, said Mrs. Abington, sitting herself down on the side of his bed, don't talk at this rate, Mr. Y— is come here on purpose; now you have settled your mind, the sooner it is put in execution the better, besides, Sir, you will find your heart more at ease when this matter is concluded.

For my part, continued Y—, I said nothing; your grace well knows it is not the province of an attorney to meddle in family affairs.

Right,

Right, I replied,—I knew not what to answer; were there ever such a pack, think you?—Go on, Mr. Y—, pray proceed, said I.

After what I have said, I suppose your grace will not be surprized that Mr. Abington was prevailed on to make another will, which will is the identical one now in Doctor's Commons.

Very well, Mr. Y—, I see the whole transaction; Mr. Edward Abington—pardon me my lord duke, he interrupted, a moment, and you shall be satisfied of what followed.

Some months after the time I have been speaking of, I was again  
sent

sent for to the hall, miss Abington was returned from Bath, and then with her uncle and aunt at their own house. — I found Mr. Edward Abington in his library, his head reclined on his hand, and seemingly in poor spirits, I thought he perted up on seeing me, for the moment I shook him by the hand, he declared I should not leave Newton hall that evening; I am alone, Mr. Y—, said he, I want this opportunity to talk to you of affairs, which at some other times is not so convenient; to be plain, Mr. Y—, I am determined to make another will, I have never enjoyed myself since my last was executed;—poor Jamima has met with very severe disappointments, her cousin is not the man, Mr. Y—,



Y—, to make her happy; I have no notion of making my child miserable to keep up a family.

I must own, I said, I thought it a pity that miss could not bring herself to like her cousin, for where there was such an estate, I thought the man of very little consequence, —turning his eye on mine, perhaps your grace may condemn this way of thinking, right or wrong. I was taught from my first setting out in life to consider the main chance superior to all other views. It is that, my lord duke, which makes me sit tolerably warm;—it is that which makes me respected in the neighbourhood;—it is that, and he began to stroke his ruffles, which has got me a footing in  
some

some of the green fields belonging to a certain baronet.

I know what you will say, Frank, why I did curse him inwardly a thousand times;—but then my tongue, no—no, I took care to keep that within bounds.

Such a heart is past mending,—so very rotten,—so much impaired by the hard drudgery of Satan, that even the hand of virtue, with her balsamic ointments, could write no cure.—Go on, Sir,—pray go on,—faith I knew not what to say to the fellow.

I see, my lord duke, returned he hemming, he is so addicted to this confounded trick, that he will  
hem—

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hem—hem—hem, a hundred times in an hour; I see, repeated he, I am unfortunate enough to differ from your grace in opinion.

Never mind that, Mr. Y—, we will both enjoy our own opinions, don't let a matter so trifling interrupt your narrative.

Bless me, said he, I forget where I was, but laying three of his drumstick fingers on his broad chin, I have it now, he cried,—Oh, now I have it, ay—ay, Mr. Edward Abington was talking of the alteration in his will.

My patience quite exhausted, I told him, I desired only to be informed



formed if he did make another will, and the purport of it.

Why yes, my lord duke, to be plain and honest, he did, and the purport of it was this, that his niece, miss Jamima Abington, should possess his whole fortune, except five thousand pounds, which he bequeathed as a legacy to his nephew, Mr. Thomas Abington.

And pray Sir, who are witnesses to this will?

Witnesses, why let me see,—oh, yes, I can recollect,—my clerk is one, the coachman another, and the gardener the third.

Where

Where are those servants, Mr. Y—? Are they still in the family?

Yes,—yes, and please your grace, they are snug enough in the family, I believe it will be some difficulty to make them speak out.

But you can swear, Mr. Y—, they were witnesses to the will, and that Mr. Edward Abington signed it.

My lord duke, I can swear to be sure on an occasion, but the best way will be to make them confess, and then your grace knows I am out of the scrape.

But

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But your clerk, Mr. Y—, I suppose he would have no scruples.

As to him, and please your grace, he is a very tractable lad, if I do but hold up my finger it is sufficient.

Before we consult on a method how to proceed, tell me, Mr. Y—, the artifices used to secrete this will.

To the best of my knowledge, your grace's commands shall be obeyed ;—I think the poor gentleman at the hall had not been dead above five hours, when I received a summons to repair there immediately ; God knows my heart, I did

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D

not



not guess on what account; for, as I told your grace before, I was sent for on *all* occasions; — just at the gate, I happened to meet my old friend the undertaker, and, without asking any questions, we proceeded to the breakfast parlour; my companion being soon after called out by one of the servants, I saw none of the family till he had mounted his horse, I suppose they were busy giving him orders; indeed, the old Mr. Abington told me so, for he was the first who came down.

Mr. Abington—Sir, excuse me, that I interrupt you at this interesting part; pray, where has this gentleman kept himself? I think, Mr. Y—, you have never mentioned his name before.

Between

Between you and I, and please your grace, it is no great matter whether ever his name is mentioned at all; he is a fly, cunning old fox, one who is always plodding mischief, yet has not the heart to pay those who put it in execution;—he stalks about the house,—is for ever listening at doors,—speaks very little, and when he does speak, it is generally in whispers.

So Mr. Abington came down to you,—excuse me, Mr. Y—, I am very impatient.

And please your grace, as I said before, he was the first that I saw, indeed the first who mentioned the affair we now are upon:—His countenance

countenance to be sure expressed some marks of concern, it is not for me to judge whether real or affected; no doubt it is decent to look sorrowful on such occasions.

Mr. Y—, said he, taking my hand, you have heard of our great loss, my poor dear brother—here he wiped his eyes; A great loss indeed, I returned, he will be much wanted in our parts; but you must comfort yourself, sir, we are all mortal, and if miss Jamima will consent to have the young squire, the estate you know, Mr. Abington, will be still in the family.

Still



Still in the family! retorted he, standing up and staring with surprise, how do you mean, Mr. Y—? What are you talking of? The devil can't hinder my son from enjoying it;—she marry my son,—she have any thing to do with us!—No, no, sir, her hopes are all at an end; we have at last been a match for her.

Stop, stop, Mr. Abington! I replied, don't be in a hurry. I know other things; I find you are unacquainted with the contents of Mr. Edward's last will;—Last will, zounds! Last will, what last will? Don't frighten us out of our wits, explain yourself, Mr. Y—; I am certain by his last will, my son—Well, well, sir, inter-

rupting him, come with me, I will convince you of your mistake, desiring he would follow me to the library; without reply, he bounced open the door that separated the parlour from that room, and entered it staring, stamping, and storming like a madman:—

Well, Mr. Y—, he exclaimed, what is it you are going to tell?—

What is it we are to expect?—

Have you got the key, sir, said I, of that bureau yonder?

I don't know whether I have or not,—I will send my wife down, she shall unlock it.

What is it, Mr. Y—, you want with my keys? Coming in the moment after her husband left the room

room, What is it, in a tone still more angry, that you would have my husband believe? — Come, come, madam, I replied, don't put yourself in a hurry, you had better exert your patience; there is another will, it can't be helped, you must make the best of it.

And are we ruined, she cried? Are we undone, and by you too Mr. Y—? Is this the return you make? Is this a specimen of gratitude? Tell me, sir, what is this will? Where is it? Oh I shall run distracted! I shall be sent to bedlam! What that gypsey, that minx,—shall she—no, I'll poison her first; my son intended to have made you a present of a thousand guineas, Mr. Y—, but you would not tell



us of this will; he was mad when he made it;—yes—yes, yes, I thought he looked wild when we came into the house;—I'll have law if I live, Mr. Y—, my husband shall spend every farthing he is worth, but I will bring in the old hypocrite insane.

Such a fury!—Well, thought I, I will always live a bachelor, lest such another as Mrs. Abington should fall to my share;—I see I divert your grace, but indeed I cannot describe what a passion she was in, —every minute I expected when the fire-pan, tongs and shovel would be levelled at my head;—I knew it was in vain to expostulate, therefore sat down patiently whilst she

## THE COTTAGE. 57

she vented her rage.—The papers contained in the bureau, were tossed to every corner of the room; some she tore,—some she burnt,—some she stamped under her feet;—at length, she called to me to ask what drawer the will was in? But before I could rise to shew her, she discovered it amongst the scattered papers, and, as sure as I live, if I had not told her she might be hanged for burning it, she would have committed it instantly to the flames.

Such a scene, when the old gentleman and his son entered, cursing, —swearing, —threatning; in short, in my own defence, I was obliged to promise secrecy;—

58 THE COTTAGE.

What could I do, my lord? They vowed they would ruin me; and to be sure, as they said, it was no concern of mine;—I acted like an honest man, in letting them know there was another will; I could not be expected to answer for other people's consciences, I find it sufficient, and please your grace, to answer for my own.

I dare say you do, Mr. Y—, pray let me know what followed.

Your grace, I suppose, can guess the rest; there was no great difficulty in bringing over the witnesses, some money and large promises tyed their tongues fast enough;—a hundred guineas in the  
hand



hand of a dependant appears a large sum ; every person has not the generosity of your grace, your honour would have scorned to have offered such a paltry present as they offered me ; if I had not done business for the family, they should not have come off quite so easily.

I am satisfied, Mr. Y—, I too well know their meanness and their perfidy ;—this he took as a compliment to himself, I could plainly perceive the stupid fellow thought I spoke with resentment on his account ;—every grain of my patience is fled, — I can say no more, only that, he is, at this very time, skulking about the neighbourhood of Newton-hall, watching for an opportunity to sound the gardener  
and

60 THE COTTAGE.

and coachman. — Nothing like setting a thief to catch a thief; he would have waved this employment, but I found means, disagreeable as it seemed, to make him set about it with *eclat*. — The result of his proceedings with many other things very material, I shall leave till I have the happiness to shake you by the hand.

I direct this to Nut-hill, I think the twenty-second you fixed to be there. — Yours, my dear Osborne, most sincerely yours,

LESTER.

L E T.

## LETTER XXII.

From miss Osborne to miss Madden.

The Cottage.  
**E**VERY wish of my heart fulfilled—every one except that of embracing my dear—dear Molly—not an hour—not a moment, but I long for your presence.

Who could have told me some months since that—why no living creature could have told me, it is not the province of an earthly being to lay open the great events of providence;—the allwise power speaks for itself—he showers benefits when we least expect them;  
he



## 62 THE COTTAGE.

he teaches us how to support afflictions, and how to rejoice in his gifts.

The duke, my dear, is returned, he returned about ten last night, we were all assembled in the little room to receive him; miss Abington would not be prevailed on to go up to her apartment till she had welcomed the lord of her heart;—she knows nothing of the late discovery;—his grace declares it shall remain a secret till her health is quite established.

Impossible to describe how she received him—impossible to paint his joy when she advanced to meet him — fatigued — harraffed almost out of his life, yet you would have  
thought

## THE COTTAGE. 63

thought he knew not what fatigue was.

Every body adores him,—every creature when they look up to this charming couple, appear to contemplate their own happiness, it seems as if from the fountain of their felicity, streams ran to enrich us all.

Oh, my dear Molly, we are indeed all enriched by it;—is it not from them I am taught to look up at lord Portland?—Is it not from them that my dear parents will call this amiable youth by the sweet, the tender name of son?—Is it not through their interposition my brother is soon to be united to all his hopes?—The bright prospects dazzle

## 64 THE COTTAGE.

zle my eyes,—it is too—too much  
for my weak head.

Friday we all go to Shafto Place  
—yes, my dear, we leave the  
peaceful cottage, where I have ex-  
perienced so many strange vicissi-  
tudes;—where, after measuring so  
many painful steps—I now glide  
up and down, free from every care  
—from every anxious doubt.

What do you think is to become  
of old Isaac and Sarah?—Do you  
imagine they are to be left behind?  
No—no, they are not to be left be-  
hind,—they are to go with us, his  
grace would not rest under a roof  
where this good couple could not  
find a welcome.

Let



## THE COTTAGE. 65

Let me tell you, whilst fresh on my memory, the alterations intended at the cottage.

All that pleasing rusticity which cannot fail to delight a sensible mind to be preserved with great caution—the front—the windows, the little garden,—the vines to remain in the same order—behind the cot so as not to attract the eyes of passengers, will be built a commodious room, large enough to entertain a few particular friends of the exalted pair, who, for the future, are to look on this retreat as their own.

My little room, as I call it, to be hung with India paper, a chints window curtain, chairs and fopha covered

## 66 THE COTTAGE.

covered with the same.—The new apartment, both above and below, furnished with blue lustring;—the old man's kitchen, and the furniture in it, to remain as it now is—the present apartments above, to be hung with plain blue paper,—beds, window curtains and chairs, white callico.

Behind the house, on the side of both hills, for a mile or upwards, are to be planted different kinds of flowering shrubs, the streams which trickle down to be directed to the green turf beneath, so as to form a serpentine lake, through a dark wood, not a hundred yards distant from the cot.

Number-

Numberless alterations besides those I have spoke of, are now projecting, but none please me like the deference paid to my favourite old yew tree; you recollect it was under its venerable branches, I was empowered from heaven to wipe away a stain stamped on the purest work of nature.

His grace has just shewn me the design, I find it has been the employment of some of those moments which many people, loaded with infinity of blessings, sleep away—Sleep perhaps, without once dreaming of the great debt of gratitude; such, Dr. South says, can only be compared to swine, who feed and grovel under an oak, filling themselves with the mast, but  
never



## 68 THE COTTAGE.

never so much as looking up either to the boughs that bore, or to the hand that shook it down.

For a moment, forget the author of this admirable simile, and think you see before you the snowy pillar of marble placed at the roots of my venerable favourite; I know nothing of proportion, therefore cannot send you the dimensions, but read the inscription; let me hear what you think of it.

*The iron tooth of time thy trunk shall wound,  
And fell thee, leafless, sapless, to the ground;  
But on this virgin marble, fair as truth,  
Thy fame shall blossom in eternal youth.*

Fool indeed! I was actually going to ask your thoughts of the  
lines

## THE COTTAGE. 69

lines before you had read them.—  
Adieu, my dear Molly, miss Abington is just stepping into the chariot, our airing will not be long, likely I may find time to write again at my return. — Most affectionately yours,

AUGUSTA OSBORNE.

P. S. To be sure I must be out of my wits not to tell you the witnesses to Mr. Edward Abington's last will are secured, and the civil gentleman for once busied in an honest employ.

*(Here several Letters between these two Ladies are omitted.)*

LET-

## LETTER XXIII.

From the same to the same.

Shafto Place.

**Y**OU complain my dearest friend, that I have wrote but twice in the last fortnight;—did you know how much I have on my head you would change your style, and say I was very good.

Bless my heart, I don't like to think of Thursday three weeks;—let me see—I believe Thursday three weeks is the 10th day of next month; I am sadly vexed you cannot be with us; for my part I should



should be glad to have the ceremony performed at our own parish church;—my father has pressed for it more than once, but Sir Hugh inflexible, vows we shall not depart from his house till the important day is over. What can I say, lady Susan and miss Abington submit entirely to his commands? Can I be refractory, my dearest Molly? Can I run counter to this indulgent relation?—Make yourself easy, you shall certainly go to town with us; we all return to Nut hill the Monday after.—Well—well, I will say no more of that day.

Miss Abington mends every hour, her cheerfulness is returned, —she is more beautiful than ever, his grace all rapture, he doats on her

her to distraction,—he will not suffer her to sigh;—he trembles if she does but look thoughtful, when he lifts her hand to his lips, it is in a manner so soft and gentle, as if he feared his breathing on it would ruffle her.

Sir Hugh and lady Melcombe see no company but ourselves; miss Abington is not yet enough recovered to bear the conversation of strangers; we go out an airing most mornings, the duke, lord Portland, miss Abington, and myself, in one carriage; Sir Hugh, lady Susan, and her delighted Frank, in another; my father and mother you know are great *stay-at-homes*, and there is no prevailing on lady Melcombe to leave them.

The

The extent of our drive is generally to the cottage, where we spend half an hour, talk of the alterations, and project a thousand agreeable schemes.

Every July his grace proposes to pass with his beloved Jamima on this favourite spot; he has engaged lord Portland and my brother, to bring us to rejoice with them; Isaac and Sarah are to come down and preside as master and mistress of this family; there will be no servants except those absolutely necessary; our scheme is to live like cottagers, we shall wear nothing but linnen gowns, — eat nothing but the plainest things, — go to

Vol. III. E bed



## 74 THE COTTAGE.

bed early, — get up early, — walk, —  
 ride, — sometimes read, — some-  
 times entertain ourselves with mu-  
 sic; in fine clear days, breakfast,  
 dine and sup in a pavilion, now  
 erecting in the wood; in gloomy  
 weather fly to the cheerful new  
 apartment within. — My dear Molly  
 you are requested to make one of  
 this happy circle; I know you will  
 prefer our way of life here to all  
 the gaiety you will see in the great  
 town; I judge of your taste by my  
 own, we have lived long enough  
 together to be acquainted with  
 each others likings and dislikings;  
 besides, you tell me you love every  
 person I love, you are partial to  
 every place that pleases me; — very  
 well,

well, so you confess you love lord Portland, a mighty pretty declaration;—depend on it his lordship shall know all this, I vow I will run and tell him this moment;—

What is it my dear Augusta that you will tell me?

Bless me how I started!—Who could have supposed he was looking over my shoulder? Was ever any thing so sly?

My lord I find I must be on the watch.—

These men my dear upon my word—

I know, miss Madden, your sweet friend was going to abuse

me; you can't think how I have struggled to get the pen from her little bewitching fingers.—Pray tell—on my knees I entreat you will tell me this important secret—what a fool to discover myself before I had seen. “I vow I will run—” and tell him this moment,” she meant me by the smile on her sweet dimpled cheek, yet now I am here at her elbow she won't say what it is, nay—she has folded down the paper at the very words, commanding me, by her sparkling harbingers, not to examine.

Come—come lord Portland have patience—Suffer me to seal the letter, miss Madden will soon enough unravel this little mystery;—but here comes lady Melcombe, very opportunely indeed, Pray my dear lady,



lady, take this teasing mortal from me.

Not I indeed, miss Osborne, he has my leave to tease you as much as he will.

So—so—one of my hands seized by her ladyship, the other by her accomplice; see Molly, they are absolutely running away with me, I entreat you both to let me tell her I have once more my freedom.

But miss Osborne, I entreat you will suffer me to say, you will soon lose it for ever.

Oh, lady Melcombe! pardon me, that I take the pen only to contradict you; miss Osborne shall never lose her freedom, she shall

## 78 THE COTTAGE.

go where she will, — come when she will, — in short she shall be the sole arbitress of her own and my actions.

Fine talking this, — don't believe him, my dear cousin, see how I am used by Sir Hugh, — he could vow and protest, and I know not what, yet forsooth I must not go to London without him, no — he would not trust me with the dearest friends on earth, unless he could be of the party.

Happy — happy lady Melcombe, your portion of happiness is very large, mine is dealt out by the same bountiful hand; every day, — every hour adds some new treasure

# THE COTTAGE 79

sure to my rich store. Love,  
gratitude, and admiration, employ  
both the sleeping and waking  
moments of your most affectionate

AUGUSTA OSBORNE.



## LETTER XXIV.

From the same to the same.

Shafto-Place

**W**HAT did my brother omit the particulars of Lord Portland's first visit to the cottage? Why, my dear, I charged him not to forget the most trivial incident; but, I suppose, his head was so full of his own affairs, that he forgot mine in acquainting you of my happy situation; I imagine he thought he had acquainted you with every thing material; but take the whole, I think

think recollection will not fail me on an event so interesting.

The evening my brother escorted Lady Susan and Lord Portland to Shafto-Place, I received a note from my mother acquainting me they all intended to be at the cottage the next morning; by her saying *all* I conjectured Lord Portland would be of the party;—little did I guess the intention of this visit,—I knew not why, nor can I to this moment account for the perturbations I felt,—I could not be alarmed to find that I was so soon to embrace Lady Susan; I long had expected, I long had wished for that honour;—what can all this mean

## 82 THE COTTAGE.

mean thought I? Still I continued to question my heart; and still it continued thumping; — my dear Jamina smiled when I said Lord Portland intended coming with his sister; I have since discovered what made her smile, but that you shall know by and by.

About eleven the next morning, standing at the window of my little room, I saw two carriages driving swiftly down the hill; — the first I discovered to be Lord Portland's, the second Sir Hugh's; full of impatience to behold Lady Susan, upon my word I am sincere, you know his lordship at that time had not given me the least reason to suspect even a preference, I  
ran



ran to the gate, and there waited till the carriages drove up; Lady Susan first perceived me through the side glass, and whispering my brother, I could see their eyes sparkle with pleasure directed towards me; in a moment I was surrounded by all my smiling friends; Lady Susan threw herself into my arms,—Lord Portland caught one of my hands,—his grace with a countenance rather arch tapped me on the cheek, eagerly enquiring how his Jamima had slept, but without waiting for an answer flew into the house.

Miss Abington had not then ventured from her apartment, and Lady Susan desiring to see her instantly

stantly, I conducted her ladyship to my charming friend, leaving them together, to pay my duty and respects to those below ; I met the duke, he enquired if Lady Susan was with Miss Abington, and whether I thought he might be admitted ? I think your grace, I returned, had not better go up immediately, Miss Abington perhaps may be fluttered at seeing her long-expected friend ; If that is the case, Miss Osborne, he replied, will you favour me with five minutes conversation ? — I looked up at him with an inquisitive eye wondering what he had to communicate.—Don't be surprized, my dear, you have no cause for concern,

## THE COTTAGE. 85

cern, just go and speak to the good folks within, you will find me in the garden.

Full of curiosity, like all other women, I staid no longer than to ask how they did, before I tripped out after him ;—My dear Augusta, he exclaimed, as I advanced, presenting him my offered hand, don't be hurried,—don't tremble so,—How could I be such a fool? I did tremble from head to foot; I forget my reply, but his grace proceeded—

Are you satisfied, Miss Osborne, my friendship to you is sincere?—That your happiness is nearly connected with my own? — Do you think there is another woman on earth,



## 86 THE COTTAGE

earth, my Jamima excepted, who I wish to see happy as yourself?

Indeed, my lord duke, I believe what you say;—I believe no living creature ever experienced such unbounded generosity as I have experienced from your grace.

Upon my word, Miss Osborne, you have mortified me beyond what I can express; pray, my dear madam, talk no more in that strain,—I only wish you to think me your sincerest friend, in confirming that, my highest vanity is gratified.

Think you my sincerest friend! Yes, sir, I not only think so, but

I

I am well assured of this flattering truth;—the same affection that binds me to my brothers, binds me to your grace;—the same joy that warms my heart when I see them happy, salutes me when I contemplate your grace's happy prospects;—I never felt for my brothers what I felt for your grace the moment that an angel was restored to your wishes.

You have silenced me, Miss Osborne, I want words,—your exalted sentiments pall and sicken a reply before it finds utterance; I have a friend,—here he turned his eyes from me and paused,—I have a friend, Miss Osborne, the only man on earth who merits so much excellence:—I was silent, I stood  
like

## 88 THE COTTAGE.

like a fool;—if brothers, if the person who has now the honour to address you, can boast so great an interest in your heart,—if they can say, virtue, purity, and angelic sweetness rejoice in their felicity, what must be the lot of him, destined to call such virtue, such purity, such angelic sweetness all his own.

Your grace is too partial, indeed I merit little attention,—you are blind to my faults, so is your Jamima.

Very well, smiling, you shall have your own way, my sweet friend,—think me blind,—think me partial,—but I entreat you will think Lord Portland—

Lord



Lord Portland ! Lord Portland !—interrupting him, what is it your grace would have me understand ?—My face and neck dyed like crimson ;—you certainly mistake, my lord duke, his lordship never thought of me,—he never—

Pardon me, my dear, don't proceed ; I am impatient to set you right ; he has thought of you, —he has loved, — he has loved from the first time he saw you,—he has loved, at a time too when there could be no hope,—he has continued to love you ever since ; —he is a noble youth, Miss Osborne, — he possesses such sentiments of honour as few can equal.

I wish

I wish your grace had kept this secret from me,—I think I could chide you for making me acquainted with it,—it will cause an awkwardness in my behaviour towards his lordship;—my brother loves him,—he was his school-fellow,—he certainly will be angry, if I even look with reserve, and how, in this odd situation, can I look otherwise?

Before he could reply, lady Susan tapped against one of the windows, and away flew my companion, leaving me to ruminate on what had passed.

My inclinations would have led me to enjoy a few moments uninterrupted, but this I found impossible; lady Susan again appeared at the window,—again she waved her

her hand, nodded her head, beckoning me to join her,—approaching the house, I looked round on every side, I knew not what or whom I so much dreaded to behold;—yet was I full of fear,—full of apprehension;—my mother and lady Melcombe, who that instant came towards me, asked if they might see Miss Abington?—You can't think how I started, hesitating and faltering in my reply, as if I had never heard them speak before.

I could fill a volume with the transactions of this day, —I could write for ever on a subject so near my heart;—but I have this moment a message from the duke that my presence is necessary be-

low



## 92 THE COTTAGE.

low ; let it suffice to say whilst my mother and lady Melcombe remained with the duke in Miss Abington's apartment, I went down, at the request of Lady Susan, into the little room, where, in a few minutes, we were joined by Lord Portland and my brother ; — I don't know how I looked, — I can't tell what I said, — all people are silly, I believe, on such occasions ; — it was there, my dear Molly, it was in that fortunate little room I learned my happiness, — it was there I promised to be Lord Portland's, — it was there lady Susan promised to be my sister.

What a day was this ! — What transports did every eye send forth !

How

## THE COTTAGE. 93

—How did my father weep with joy when he blessed us!—How did my mother hold us to her bosom!

—How many times as she embraced Lady Susan, did she call her her dear, dear daughter. —

Miss Abington could scarce be prevented from running down when his grace informed her of our happiness.

Another message, — adieu, my dear Molly, my heart is sufficient to contain you :— yours,

AUGUSTA OSBORNE.

LET-

## LETTER XXV.

From the same to the same.

Shafto-Place.

CAN you credit who I have seen? Can you believe I have seen Miss Abington's vile relations? Yes, I have seen—I have been with the whole iniquitous crew,—father, mother, son, and the civil gentleman came in one carriage; — pity their own coachman had not drove,—Satan, I dare say, could have helped them to a postilion, then the equipage would have been compleat.

Lord help me! How was I surprized at coming down!—Miss  
Abington



## THE COTTAGE 95

Abington faint and shedding tears; the duke by her on a sofa supporting her head on his shoulder, lady Susan holding drops to her nose, my brother talking earnestly to his grace, a confused noise in the opposite parlour, lady Melcombe coming from thence as pale as ashes; before I could enquire the cause I found my hand in lord Portland's, he that moment entered with her ladyship, and seeing my surprize, drew me to another part of the room, whispering who were in the house, and that Miss Abington was so unfortunate to be the first that espied them.

I am sure, my dear Molly, you commiserate our situation;—how distressing!

distressing ! — The duke protested he would not stir from Miss Abington till she had recovered her fright, — one cried they could not bear the sight of such wretches ; another exclaimed they could not treat them with common civility ; lady Melcombe said they had struck her dumb, she could utter nothing whilst in their presence, but, pray, sit, gentlemen ; pray, madam, do be seated ; — poor Sir Hugh ! How we all pitied him ; but dear good creature, he will submit to any thing, if by it he can serve his friends.

Lady Melcombe, uneasy to have Sir Hugh left so disagreeably circumstanced, asked, if some of the company would go with her  
and

and relieve him from his hard duty; Amazon like I turned out the first volunteer, — example in such cases is very prevalent, many more offered their service, but as lord Portland and myself were selected by her ladyship, lady Susan and the other gentlemen remained with Miss Abington.

I wish you could have seen my first appearance in this respectable circle; — the most guilty of them all could not look with more consciousness; it is hard to blush for those who are past blushing for themselves: — I believe her ladyship or Sir Hugh did not think them of consequence enough to say, this is lord Portland, or this is Miss Os-

Vol. III. F borne,



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borne, but whilst Sir Hugh took the opportunity to withdraw, we all sat down, looking at each other as if we were met to do penance; would you like to have the conversation which ensued? Very well, —so you shall.

My lady, said the elder Abington, soon as we had taken our seats, is his grace yet at leisure?

Not immediately, returned her ladyship;—the attorney then stood up, and bowing very low to lady Melcombe, I should be glad, madam, if his grace would permit me a few words;—No—no, Mr. Y— said the old Jezebel, both her hideous black eyes pointed towards her nose, there is no occasion

sion for private conversations. We will have the affair talked over before us all.

Now the young 'squire, as the civil gentleman calls him, began to exert himself; pray Sir, said he, what can you have to say to his grace? I fancy you have talked to the purpose with this great man, or the consciences of Simon and Robin would not have been so very tender.

Sir, replied Y—, strutting about the room with no small airs of consequence, you are going to put yourself in a passion again, but you must not do it here, young gentleman. Don't you know, with

F 2

his

his little face worked up to a frightful appearance, don't you know what both the fellows told you? Don't you remember, they said their old master walked every night, and that he had many times undrawn their curtains? The poor creatures, madam, turning to lady Melcombe, could not sleep in their beds before they discovered the affair.

Impatient to acquaint his grace with this part of the conversation, I slid out, gave it in their own words, and was with them again instantly;—at my return I saw the old beldame with her handkerchief to her eyes, snuffling, sobbing, and making a strange noise, not one tear could she squeeze, her flinty



flinty heart even refused those drops common to a hypocrite. I suppose they began to grow warm, I perceived lady Melcombe very importunate to have the subject dropped. — Pray gentlemen, said she, do forbear; I entreat, madam, looking at the woman, nothing more may transpire of this affair before me, you know I am a stranger to you Mrs. Abington, what have strangers to do in family affairs? A servant entering with chocolate, prevented any farther altercations, but notwithstanding they deemed it convenient to keep silence before him, yet did I see such shaking of heads, — such significant shrugs, — such sarcastic looks,

102 THE COTTAGE.

looks, as spoke mutual upbraidings throughout the whole clan.

The footman had but just left the room when the door opened, and in stepped the duke, I protest the dignity he assumed on this occasion, the determined countenance he put on, together with a look of contempt which he cast on the Abingtons, threw my spirits into such a flutter, that I could scarce find my way out.—

I thought the guilty wretches would have sunk, when, with silent indignation, he waved his hand for them to be seated; — Lady Melcombe and lord Portland rising to follow me, I heard his grace say, as I opened the door, I wish  
not

not to detain the ladies, but my lord I must beg the favour of your presence.

Glad was I to escape from such a scene, I hope I shall never more behold their wicked faces;—what can there be in guilt, my dear Molly, to make the virtuous tremble?—I am certainly not afraid of them,—they cannot hurt me, yet I don't know how it happens, I am strangely terrified when shut up with bad people, I hate to sit by them,—I hate to look at them—If they speak I cannot avoid turning away my head; certainly you will say, it cannot be agreeable either to sit by them—to look at them—or to hear them speak. But

now I look F 4 what



what is it, I ask, that makes the innocent tremble when in their presence? If you sit near them, their garments will not infect you: If they look at you, their mischievous eyes can give no wound; neither if they speak, can their breath, though baneful, poison a breast inhabited by virtue.

Oh, my dear Molly, the hardened wretches I have been with have lost the very colouring of virtue, as I said before, they are past blushing, lost indeed—to make a confession of their guilt,—to plead for mercy, — to entreat on their knees that his grace would not expose them, and all this without a tinge of the scarlet dye.

## THE COTTAGE. 105

I thank God we have fairly got rid of them! I could scarce contain my transports when they mounted the vehicle;—the duke sadly fatigued, flew to us like one escaped from prison; lord Portland protested he would not spend three such hours again for an immense sum.—The deuce take them, say I, not content with spoiling our stomachs, but they must spoil our dinner, past six before we sat down at table.—Was ever any thing so abominably rude? one would really suppose the brutes are unacquainted with the forms of good breeding.

Passion, revenge and disappointment, have brought many

F 5

things

things to light, nothing so common as for rogues to impeach rogues.—Miss Abington, out of her great clemency to screen them from publick calumny, have permitted them to remain at Newton-hall for one year longer, at the end of which time I find they intend retiring to a certain county, where they boast of many intimate friends.—The will, with all the other writings, are immediately to be given up, and miss Abington has already received securities for forty thousand pounds, deposited in the Bank.—I think I would have offered them a suit of mourning.

Only think of their assurance.—  
As I live they desired to see my  
charming



charming friend; — No, was the reply his grace sternly made to this request, no,—you shall never more behold that angel. I have said, she forgives you all, what have you further to hope for?

The civil gentleman, as we call him, whispered his grace, that he should be much grieved if miss Abington took against him; not at all, Mr. Y—, not at all, he returned, miss Abington does not look back on what is past with *resentment*; she has too good and too great a heart to harbour sentiments of that kind, she considers you, Mr. Y—, in a very opposite light from *resentment*.—Upon my word, he replied, certainly the man could not understand the import

of this last sentence, neither could he be such a fool, I imagine, not to understand it; upon my word the young lady is very good, and very kind, well—well, rubbing his hands, miss has not forgot, I see—she is not like some people, who throw off their old acquaintance on every slight occasion.

They are such low, such artful knaves as this, that sully every science and every profession.—I am sorry to say, even the sacred function is not exempt from such examples, though I hope and believe they are seldomer to be met with in that body of men than any other.

What is it that makes the gentlemen of the sword receive such frequent

frequent flights and insults. It proceeds from an error in judgment, or rather a narrowness of heart.—often have I known officers of family,—of education,—of unexceptionable morals, come into a town, where, perhaps, some short time before, have been a parcel of worthless, lowbred creatures of the same profession, who have made themselves obnoxious to every family in the neighbourhood.—The consequence is this, one exclaims, I will have no more to say to a parcel of raking fellows.—Another, they shall have no more invitations to my house.—A third, they are all alike, I hate the very colour of their coats.

The



## 110 THE COTTAGE.

The same with regard to the gentlemen of the law, though no age can boast persons of more eminence in that profession, yet you often see the whole body suffer by a few unworthy members.

The physical line labours under the like inconvenience; in short, as I said before, so must every science and every profession. Weeds will spring up with flowers,—they grow in the same soil, and all that a skilful gardener has to do, is to weed them out before they take too deep root, and throw them to the dunghill.

I might have spared my dull reflections—I have many things to  
com-

## THE COTTAGE. III.

communicate, but for this night  
adieu, my eyes are half closed,  
perhaps you now dream of your  
happy

AUGUSTA OSBORNE.

LET-

## 112 THE COTTAGE.

### LETTER XXVI.

From the same to the same.

Shafto-Place.

**J**UST returned from the cottage, what a charming morning!—Can I support such increasing felicity? Every day salutes me with new joys;—I hope I shall not be too much attached to this world;—I hope I shall not pine after happiness which is only lent.

Next Thursday, —next Thursday, —the time draws on apace;—yet, suppose, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, it would be the same, I should feel the same perturbations,  
if



## THE COTTAGE. 113

if either of those days ; — lie still my heart, — why such flutterings ? Is not lord Portland your own choice ? Could you admit another ?

Oh my dear Molly, what must persons experience who look forward to an event like this without any tie but interest ? Poor prostituted mortals ! bereft of every noble passion, — sacrificed to that ore which cannot purchase one moment of sweet content.

You want to know if we have made choice of any silks ; a favourite author of mine somewhere remarks, that wedding cloaths are absolutely necessary, that the mind at such times should be employed

trifles to take the attention from matters of importance.

Rules laid down by this great man ought never to be neglected; what follows will convince you how strictly we adhere to his precepts.

Miss Abington that sweet bewitching creature must excel us in every thing,—lady Susan often declares she has a great mind not to be a bride the same day with her; she says it is a mortifying circumstance,—she shall hate to look in the glass,—she knows she shall be very cross, — I tell her she may look at me, and then in the glass, if that does not keep her in good humour, I shall pronounce her cross indeed.

Well,

Well,—but you want to know about the silks; so you shall, my dear, don't be impatient.—To assist my memory I will lay patterns of each on the table;—let me see, this must have the precedence, an elegant gold stuff, Molly, with sprigs of coloured flowers, you need not ask for whom, without doubt, I mention Miss Abington's choice first;—her second suit, white and silver, the ground flat silver, the flowers raised to a beautiful height, and sweetly fancied; she has a variety of others, but I shall pass over those to tell you what she is to be dressed in on Thursday morning;—her negligee, fine book muslin, the flounces trimmed with rich point lace, as it is intended for an undress, she wears



wears a hood and handkerchief, both of which and her gloves are likewise entirely of point lace;—her shoes and coats, white sattin.

Lady Susan's silks and mine are out of the same pieces; one a white Italian lustring with gold baskets full of gold flowers, flounced with gold net; the other, a silver tissue with a laylock thrown carelessly over it.

Her ladyship is not yet determined what to wear on Thursday; she says to her woman, Get me a chints negligee, lay it on the back of a chair,—let me see—what ribbons, what lace will best suit it? That is taken away, and a sprigged muslin put in its place; perhaps four or five different kinds  
succeed

succeed the chints and muslin; then the band-boxes are tossed about, every cap and handkerchief taken out;—the next thing is, Drew, put all the trumpery out of my sight, I won't be married at all; Mr. Osborne will faint to see such a figure by the side of Miss Abington.

Mrs. Drew, smiling, then begins to pick up some little matters from every corner of the room, whilst her lady runs to me, throws her arms about my neck, kisses my cheek, and asks me, in her sprightly manner, what could possess Frank to think of such an odd mortal?

It

2118 THE COTTAGE.

It is a long time since you heard any thing of our good old couple ; pray don't think they are forgot : I will assure you Sarah sits now at my elbow in lady Melcombe's dressing room ; the worthy creatures are never so happy as with us.—they have an apartment in this house entirely to themselves, but Sarah is always on the watch to hear when we go up or down :—indeed Sir Hugh and her ladyship are very good, they frequently indulge us by bringing them into the room where we are ; you cannot imagine how happy they look when Miss Abington and I go to their apartment.

Dear creature ! I believe she never could have loved her own  
parents



parents, had they lived—I think it impossible she could have loved them, better than she does these honest people.

No pen can paint the tenderness she has experienced at their hands, —how many doors of the rich might she have knocked at before she would have gained admittance; a stranger loaded with sickness and misfortunes is not the person whom the generality of the world court to their bosoms.

I know a dowager lady of distinction that would have suffered this angelic creature to have lain at her gate fainting and expiring, rather than be incommoded with her in the house.

The

—The contrast is now strong on my ideas,—I think I see before me the poor hospitable cottagers supporting and bringing in between them the sinking unfortunate; offering every assistance and every comfort in their power; whilst the haughty dame of quality, or some of her unfeeling acquaintance, would perhaps have gazed at her from a window, sent word to her servants, if she was enquired for, to say the family were gone out, and that the young lady had better go to the next town.

When I think of, when I contemplate, such hearts of stone, my own, for a moment, forgets every feeling but resentment, contempt, and abhorrence;—again it resumes  
pleasing

pleasing enraptured sensations,—again the good old couple stand before me,—again I see them busied in acts of tenderness, watching, praying, cheerfully exhausting their little store to lighten the miseries of a stranger.

How I gaze with delight on the duke, when he takes their old withered sun-burnt hands in his!—When he calls them the preservers of his Jamima, and looks up at them with pleasure too ineffable for expression.

You can have no conception how decent and neat they appear in their new cloaths;—Isaac has two suits of plain brown broad cloth,—very fine linen,—nice

Vob III.

G

muslin



muslin cravats,—in short, every thing suitable to his age and present condition.

The old lady is likewise dressed plain, but rich and elegant;—Miss Abington was more anxious in the choice of her apparel, than in what she chose for herself:—one of her gowns is a brown sattin, the other a dove-coloured tabby; that intended for Thursday is a dark purple-tissue with white flowers; for all we could say she would not be prevailed on to have a bit of lace, and she earnestly requested her cloaths might be made in the fashion she had been accustomed to wear them.

So you will see her, my dear Molly, in her long sleeves, plaited caps, laced boddice, and the same simplicity in her manner, as when she  
came

## THE COTTAGE. 123

came to invite us to her hospitable cottage.

The duke long since made them independent, two hundred pounds a year paid quarterly the generous stipend; and they are to spend the residue of their days under the same roof with their noble benefactors.

It was first imagined both by his grace and Miss Abington, that taking them from their comfortable habitation would rather lessen than augment their happiness, but this they were soon undeceived in by the manner a hint was received, of our leaving the cottage.

We were one morning assembled in the old man's kitchen to observe how dextrously my mother's Alice and her two associates were employed in providing din-

## 124 THE COTTAGE.

ner; Isaac had the care of the fire, Sarah was busied in observing the boilers and winding up her little jack, whilst Alice stood at the dresser running jellies for Miss Abington.

My dear good creatures, said his grace as he entered, why will you make yourselves such slaves? Why don't you order my Thomas to assist you?—No — no, and please your honour, replied the old man, shaking his head, Mr. Thomas is not used to such things, a gentleman like Mr. Thomas that waits on your honour should never dirt his fingers.

I hope Thomas does not say this, returned his grace, — I hope he never refused to do any thing



## THE COTTAGE. 125

thing in this house; No indeed; and please your honour, said Isaac—No indeed, echoed Sarah, one bowing, the other curtsying to the ground, Mr. Thomas has offered many times, continued the latter, to assist us, but your honour is mistaken if you think any thing we can do for your honour and the ladies is a trouble; — we have thought ourselves in heaven as 'twere (ha'n't we Isaac?) since your honours have been in our little habitation.

What will you be sorry, good folks, replied the duke, when we leave you? — The poor old souls unable to speak, turned towards the fire;—I saw Sarah hold her apron to her eyes, whilst Isaac,

with the back of his hand, wiped away several drops which trickled down his furrowed cheeks.

My dear good souls, said the duke, taking a hand of each, don't weep, — don't grieve—you shall never be parted from us.— No, that you shall not my valuable friends, cried Miss Abington, my dear — my dear, dear nurse, my compassionate Sarah, dry up your tears, applying her cambrick handkerchief to her eyes, we will not go without you;—his grace supposed you would be loth to quit this comfortable dwelling,— we always intended to visit you every summer, but now we are more obliged to you than ever,—  
you

you shall both live with us, indeed you shall.

His grace appeared transported with gratitude to behold the fidelity and affection of this honest pair, I saw him steal a kiss from his Jamima, whilst they endeavoured to express, by words of unpolished sincerity, the store of happiness conveyed to their worthy hearts.

So, so—I must lay down my pen; Lady Susan is taking the paper from me; —Mr. G—, Sir Hugh's lawyer is below, Y—'s opposite I will assure you.—Her ladyship—well do or say what you please, lady Susan, I will tell Miss Madden, indeed I will tell her you want resolution,—I must sign first,—she



28 THE COTTAGE.

won't hear the writings read,—she will stop her ears;—there is no necessity for all this parade—I dare say it will not be proposed,—but she says the man had the parchments laid on the table, and she heard something by God's permission, and the word marriage, hum,—hum—hum—from his lips before she left the room.—You see how it is,—believe me, my dear Molly, at all times I am yours most affectionately,

AUGUSTA OSBORNE.

LET-

LETTER XXVII.

From the same to the same.

Shafto Place.

WE have been sadly disconcerted, a family just dropped in to spend a fortnight, distant relations of lady Melcombe's, that fond foolish couple her ladyship used to speak of, with their son and two daughters; heaven grant some share of wisdom is bestowed on their children. I can't bear to think we are to have a parcel of fools with us to-morrow! Dinner is now on the table, perhaps in the evening I may steal a few minutes

to give you my opinion of the visitors.

The father and mother are ridiculous beyond description, but miss Sampsons, and their brother, appear to be very sensible, well bred young people; this is some consolation, however—

Sir Hugh, and lady Melcombe, have so contrived matters that we shall have none of them at church, neither are they to be acquainted with the affair till after the ceremony is over; many spectators, and some of them very ridiculous, could not fail of being a mortifying circumstance;—when we come home the secret must out, it will soon be proclaimed, not only through



## THE COTTAGE. 131

through the house, but through the village.—Sir Hugh peremptorily insists upon the bells being rung, he says their music was a happy presage of his felicity;—that he has never known sorrow since they sweetly sounded in his ears, when he saluted lady Melcombe as his bride.

You see the most sensible men have some particularities, Sir Hugh merits compliance from all the world, but certainly those he is to dispose of to-morrow ought to acquiesce with a kind of dutiful regard.

I wish lady Susan may not persist in her whim, she declares she will be the last who gives up her liberty;

herty;—she will see, that is her expression, how Miss Abington and I behave;—she does not know whether to give her right hand or her left,—what she is to say,—whether she must speak to Doctor Agnew, or to my brother; I tell her there is a valuable little book which can inform her of all these things;—what read over the matrimonial service, not for the world?—I should hate to peruse the mortifying list—I have no notion why we must vow and swear such obedience, when the men get off with a slight promise, just to take care of us in sickness and in health.

I find your ladyship not quite so ignorant of the matter as you pretend.

Yes

## THE COTTAGE. 133

Yes indeed I am, this is nothing but a scrap or so I got from lady Selina Penhurst, when I dropped in on her ladyship the evening before her nuptials.

At this rate she ran on, nor should I have been disengaged from her sprightly chat if my brother had not found us out, and claimed my companion for his own.

Her ladyship is highly entertained with the simplicity of Mr. and Mrs. Sampson; she says they are the only fools she could ever laugh at, — lovey — ducky — and dearey — the fond epithets with which they accost each other; when they speak to their daughters or son, it is the children, or poor little souls—



134 THE COTTAGE.

souls—Jackey do, do so my dear,  
—pray hold up your head Peggy;  
—Sally is but a weakly child, lady  
Melcombe; her pappa thought the  
change of air would be of great  
service to her.

Could you suppose the youngest  
miss Sampson turned of eighteen,  
her brother near twenty; I really  
pity the young folks, you cannot  
imagine how awkward this treat-  
ment makes them appear; in  
spite of the strict duty they ob-  
serve, I often see them colouring  
up to the very ears.

I am always in pain for a fa-  
mily where the heads of it are  
fools, I fear the infection will  
spread.

spread throughout the house; if their offspring happen to have more sense than themselves, they must be perpetually out of countenance, — their genius must be cramped, or give such a wrong cast to their minds, as is very difficult to eradicate; when the heads of a family are weak, folly presides at their table,—chatters by their fire side,—mixes in all their parties, and is to be met with in their very dress.

Lady Melcombe has sent up her woman; she wants, I find, to consult me on several things relative to to-morrow. — I go, my dear Molly—I take leave by a name I'm soon to lose, but you shall not be

be less dear to me when I assume  
another than you are now that I  
write

AUGUSTA OSBORNE.

hanging  
her hair partly up, and partly  
ladyship entered in a loose gown,  
LET-  
her command, when beheld her  
be lady Susan. Alas how to obey  
let me in quickly!—Knowing it to  
door, and a voice whispering, do  
threſſed, I heard a gentle tap at my  
About eight, before I was half



be less dear to me when I assume  
another than you are now that I

LETTER XXVIII.

From the same to the same.

Shafto Place, Thursday 5 o'clock.

**W**HAT a change—but I flatter myself the pleased peaceful morning was a happy preface.

About eight, before I was half dressed, I heard a gentle tap at my door, and a voice whispering, do let me in quickly!—Knowing it to be lady Susan's, Alice flew to obey her commands, when behold her ladyship entered in a loose gown, her hair partly up, and partly hanging

hanging about her face, followed by her woman, with band boxes, combs, and a multiplicity of things on her arm; there, lay it all down, said her ladyship; then turning to me, you can't think my dear, how Drew has teized me!—My patience was quite exhausted; I believe she has pinned and unpinned my hair ten times—but follow miss Osborne's directions, see how nicely her's fits—upon my word Drew I never saw you so stupid before? Bless my heart, I know I shall be a frightful figure!—Can't you dress me with as little fuss as Mrs. Alice does miss Osborne, or miss Abington's servant her lady;—instead of that you and I have been in one bustle ever since I got out of bed!

Mrs.

## THE COTTAGE 139

Mrs. Drew, with a smile of good nature, which her ladyship in the midst of her pucker could not avoid returning with a look of sweet condescension, began once more to adjust the fair locks that had undergone such frequent tortures.

The business of the toilet was near concluded, when lady Melcombe stepped in to acquaint us the gentlemen waited,—that the carriages were at the door, and miss Abington ready to go down; her ladyship said, laughing, if you are not very quick, Mr. and Mrs. Sampson will certainly be of the party; I heard him bawling for lovey's slippers as I passed the door of their chamber.

This



This hurried us to miss Abington's apartment;—the lovely Jammima, with seraphic sweetness, attired like an angel, saluted us as we entered;—whilst I live I shall never forget how she looked, I declare I stood in silent admiration, —if lady Melcombe had not again reminded us of lovey's slippers, had not again entreated we would not waste a moment, I should have gazed on the mild beauty till I had forgot the important occasion.

In the breakfast parlour we found my father and mother,—the duke, —Sir Hugh,—my brother, and my dear lord; rejoice with me that I am entitled to call him so!—Isaac and Sarah, the honour of old age, stood by the side of his grace;—  
their

their clasped hands,—their pious eyes were lifted up, as we entered, and as Sir Hugh led us forwards, the good old souls cried, God bless your honours!—God send his blessing!

The duke, lord Portland, and my brother, were pouring out some rapturous expressions, when we heard a trampling in the room over, and Sir Hugh exclaimed, as I live, Sampson and his wife getting up! With that we all ran towards the door, where each couple, hand in hand, proceeded to the carriages.

In the duke's coach went the noble pair—Sir Hugh and lady Melcombe—In my brother's, my father

father and mother, his fair bride and himself;—Sir Hugh's chariot was ordered for Isaac and Sarah; but lord Portland preventing every wish before it can spring from my heart, insisted the venerable pair, though not without much difficulty, should seat themselves in his carriage.

Thus marshalled, we drove full speed to the church, but the white and silver favours worn by the servants, though this inconvenience did not occur till too late, drew such a multitude after us, that by the time we came to alight, men women and children surrounded the carriages—some poor little infants in the arms of their mothers, —some climbing over a low wall

sur-



surrounding the churchyard, others at a small distance crying and screaming that they were left behind, whilst a number of young men and women ran and placed themselves in the church porch.

As the coaches stopped, Doctor Agnew, who came that instant from his garden, where I suppose he had been waiting our arrival, stepped up to the side of the duke's coach, and after speaking to his grace, I saw him mix in the croud of spectators, which in a moment drew off at a distance, and a number of mens hats were thrown up into the air with loud huzzas.

Now my dear Molly, you must next see us at the altar, the doctor inside the rail, his grace and the angel whose hand he held standing just without.

How

How can the most frothy ludicrous mind treat this sacred ceremony lightly? — How consider it without awe? — How be present at it without feeling a degree of reverence?

Doctor Agnew has all that dignity, — all that devotion so requisite in a divine; — he speaks as if he received his commission from above, — he looks as if a religious life was his choice.

You can't think how lady Susan trembled when their graces drew off from the altar, her fine spirits were flown, and without an effort for me to advance, she suffered my brother to conduct her to the spot just vacated by the duke and duchess;

duchess;—Her grace as she moved off placing herself next me, I could not avoid whispering her, My dear Jamima, let me be the first to give you joy, but the ceremony again beginning, she only returned it sparkling from her eyes, bowing low in return for the silent compliments paid her from all present.

Sir Hugh when he had presented my brother his valuable gift, turned towards me as if he would have said, See, my Augusta, I shall soon dispose of you.

Poor old Isaac and Sarah kept their eyes fixed on the duchess, I believe they never took them from her once whilst we continued in the church.



## 146 THE COTTAGE.

I am ashamed to tell you what a fool I was; never did any poor creature shake and tremble like me, — true as I live, when lord Portland led me forwards, I thought I should have fainted, the images that ornamented the ceiling seemed to run round and round, the rail on which I rested appeared to move, and if I had not put my hand before my eyes, I certainly should have sunk.

Don't fret, my dear, and say you are sorry I should behave so ill; I assure you, after my tremors abated, I recovered my resolution and went through the ceremony with applause.

According to Sir Hugh's directions the bells instantly struck out; the

the concourse being encreased I suppose to ten times the number they were at our entering the church, there were such shouts, such acclamations amongst the people, that, as we passed to our carriages, we could scarce hear one articulate sound;—no doubt we should have been followed home by the same noisy train, if his grace, lord Portland, and my brother had not left their purses, to be emptied at the discretion of Sir Hugh's steward who was present for that purpose.

The duke's coach being very roomy, he insisted on the doctor's accepting a place in it, and making what haste we could through the croud, in a few minutes found ourselves at Shafto-place.

How can I express the joy that spoke in every face when we met? — When we congratulated each other?

It was too much for poor Isaac and Sarah,—they slid from us and went exulting to their own parlour.

Lady Melcombe as we entered the house, opened the library door, the most elegant, since the late alterations, to be seen in any country in England; My dear happy friends, said her ladyship, taking a hand of the duchess and lady Susan, whilst I hung about my fond mother,—let us now make a comfortable breakfast; see, my loves, this is a whim of Sir Hugh's.

I



THE COTTAGE. 149

I really was struck with amazement! I never beheld any thing so beautifully elegant as the tea-equipage and the decorations intermixed;—the duke, so did lord Portland—in short, so did every person present pronounce it a lovely repast,—if possible I will try to recollect the disposition of the whole.

The long table on which it stood was covered with fine damask linnen, in the middle a large epergne full of fruits and flowers, at each corner baskets of filigranne filled with several sorts of rich cake,—the china all pure white,—the knives and spoons gold,—round every plate a chaplet of flowers,—curious nosegays inter-

spersed in small gold baskets from the top to the bottom of the table, then the wet and dry sweetmeats, jellies, coffee, tea, and chocolate, were ranged with so much taste,—so much order, that it is impossible for me to give you an idea of the pretty effect it produced.

An epicure, I suppose, would here have preferred the sense of seeing to that of tasting;—for my part, I thought the eye would never be satisfied.—Lady Melcombe permitted us this indulgence, whilst she went in pursuit of Mr. Sampson and his family, who, I have since found, were equipping themselves in their best to be seen, being informed of our nuptials before we reached the house.

You

You must understand Mrs. Sampson is amazingly fond of dress, and of wearing things that are shewy; I have frequently observed this low kind of vanity most conspicuous in weak minds,—without a genius for dress it never can adorn,—rather it adds awkwardness,—betrays what would be concealed under a plain garb,—it makes the richest habits appear stiff and unpleasing, as it does the gayest taudry and flat;—before a person can be said to dress well they must be well bred, I have seen many pretty uneducated girls look genteel in a clean linnen or silk night gown, that have made a most wretched appearance decorated out for a polite assembly,—there is a certain something very requisite either in



a diaphanous or full dress; I think it may be expressed a graceful movement, an air of refinement, in short an elegance of action.

Poor Mrs. Sampson without one attendant grace or harmony of step entered the library just as we were all seated at breakfast:—I really trembled lest her unmanaged hoop would have discomposed the beautiful order of the table, I was extremely glad when the congratulations ended and she had taken her place.

You can't imagine, my dear Molly, what an immense quantity of jewels hung at her ears, how brilliant those which she had awkwardly disposed about her head  
and

and neck her; negligee, for ought I know, might have looked tolerable on either of her daughters, but I am out of patience to see a woman of fifty-five dressed in pink and silver; — though Mrs. Sampson is well descended, and has always lived in affluence, yet you would suppose by her hand and arm she had done the drudgery of a menial servant; I am really surprized she is not mortified to help at her own table, or to draw off her gloves at another person's. — You have often rallied me on the care I take of my hand, I wish you could see Mrs. Sampson's red fist, I think, my dear, the sight of hers would cause you to change your note. — But here comes her

H 5

deary

deary, that is, he next entered the room.

Upon my word, sir, you are very fine, — very fine indeed, — plastered with gold from top to toe, — I believe he pays his taylor and peruke-maker punctually, they have certainly furnished him with the best materials and sufficient of every sort ; — lord help the man ! I never saw such a wig, — I might say, with propriety, I never saw such a great unmeaning face ; — lovey and deary, — such a couple ! — Well, heaven was very kind, if matches are made there ; — for what could any living creature, but Mr. Sampson, have done with lovey ? — Or how could any woman, except



except Mrs. Sampson, spend her days with deary ?

I was going to say something greatly in favour of the younger Mr. Sampson and his sisters, but as I have a summons to the tea-table, in justice you must suppose their easy carriage, their engaging conversation, their genteel appearance, drew off our attention from the stupid parents to fix it on their deserving children, — here comes my good old Sarah.

Well, Sarah, are you sent to fetch me? — Yes indeed, my lady, the duke and lord Portland have been sending all over the house for you.

156 THE COTTAGE.

Is not this message, think you, my dearest friend, something like a command?—I know you have high notions of duty, you say I must go instantly;—very well, I go, —I take my leave,—I fly to my dear lord,—I have your approbation in doing so;—and though I feel a kind of regret in laying down my pen before I have said half what I wanted to say, yet, my affectionate Molly, — my tender friend, I know you will be happy to see that I write

AUGUSTA PORTLAND.

LET-

LETTER XXIX.

From Lady PORTLAND to  
Lady MELCOMBE.

Nut-hill.

**T**HE duke—the duchess—  
my father and mother—my  
brother and lady Susan commission  
me to make their acknowledgements;—what a task!—How can  
I speak their gratitude?—How  
can I paint the warmth of their  
hearts to our worthy friends, when  
I want words to express what I  
feel on the account of lord Port-  
land and myself?—If you frown,  
lady Melcombe, I have done,—If  
Sir



## 158 THE COTTAGE

Sir Hugh is angry I will repell the  
overflowings of my heart.

Do pray let us see you both before we go to town;—indeed you must come,—so must Sir Hugh;—here are sad things menaced if you should only say, you will if you can,—a trap is laid to carry you with us to his grace's seat at Castlebrook;—great preparations are making for our reception,—balls, masquerades, concerts.

We have a deal of company here every day; some out of respect,—some, I am inclined to think out of curiosity;—nothing is talked of in this neighbourhood but the beautiful duchess and my charming sister.—Do you think,  
madam,

## THE COTTAGE 159

madam, there were ever a family so completely happy!—My father skips about the house like a boy,—my mother says she is younger than she was twenty years since.

I know your ladyship will be pleased to hear my brother is treating for the seat late Sir Thomas Worfleys,—I think, Lady Melcombe, you once dined there with us, it is a sweet place, and the situation desirable;—lady Susan protests she will never leave Nut-hill till she can settle within ten miles of it; I tell her ladyship I shall be very jealous that she is trying to outvie me even in duty.

To-morrow there is a grand ball given at — by two of the candidates

candidates for that borough; lord Portland being intimate with both the gentlemen, we were yesterday favoured with their company at dinner, I am sorry they pressed so much for our presence; I really don't know what we shall do to get off, I have formed a horrid conception of an election ball;—His grace thinks the hurry will be too much for the duchess, but he insists on attending us himself.

Adieu, my dear lady,—adieu, my dear Sir Hugh,—I shall write again by the next post. I have scarce a moment to myself, company for ever.—Once more adieu;

lord



## THE COTTAGE. 165

lord Portland kisses the paper, — a  
thousand good wishes are wrapped  
up in it. — I need not tell you both  
I am the happiest creature on earth,  
your's most affectionately, I remain

AUGUSTA PORTLAND.

LET-

## LETTER XXX.

Lady SUSAN OSBORNE to Lady  
MELCOMBE.

Nut-Hill.

SUCH an escape,—lord help me!—Pray Sir Hugh, if ever you offer yourself for —, don't ask me to your ball; ten thousand to one but we had all lost our lives!—Only think of our fright, dragged out of our carriages!—Dragged out in the midst of a mad rabble! Yes, as I live, in the very midst of a noisy riotous mob! I never before saw any thing of the kind; I had no idea what mon-  
sters

sters the common sort of people were at those times.

The duke and lord Portland in his lordship's chariot, following our coach, we entered the town together, but did not perceive the multitude till we drove up to the capital street; Happy circumstance the duchess was not with us, the fright would certainly have killed her!—The horses took fire at the first shout, and the concourse gathering immediately round the carriages, we screamed.—The coachmen swore.—The postilions dismounted to keep back the horses.—The horses reared on their hinder legs, entangled themselves in the harnesses, snorted, foamed and kicked with such violence, that  
not



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not a creature could venture near them, Mr. Osborne let down one of the glasses, and risked his life by jumping into the street; I held him by the coat,—I begged,—I prayed,—I believe I cried when I found him escape me.—The duke and lord Portland rushing at the same instant from the chariot, endeavoured with him to drive off the mob.—Poor lady Portland and miss Madden, sunk down to the bottom of the coach.—For my part I minded them not, I strained my eyes.—I did nothing but call on the duke, on lord Portland, and Mr. Osborne, to take us out!—In a moment I saw them at one of the doors, lord Portland bouncing it open, almost out of breath, cried, my dearest life, and without

so

so much as looking at miss Madden and poor me, caught his half dead Augusta in his arms, and bore her from us.—The duke, and my dear Frank, with open arms, whilst the coach was tossed backwards, forwards, from side to side, to the hazard of all our lives, lifted us screaming into the midst of the croud.—It was in vain to expostulate, the rabble still pressed forwards,—still kept on their hideous shouts, and as we pushed through to cross the street, cried out, there goes the noble ladies—there goes the great gentlemen—Long live Sir John S—Long live Mr. A——. Long live their noble friends.

How I rejoiced when we reached the shop of an honest grocer!  
—The

The good people perceiving we had been frightened, hurried us into a parlour, detached from the shop, bringing us drops, wine and fine cordials.—Your ladyship never saw such a parcel of poor terrified creatures.—Miss Madden had lost both her ruffles.—Lady Portland one of her point lappets.—For my part I must certainly have stepped into a kennel up to my knees; such stockings, such shoes and such coats, were never I believe seen before.—The gold net on my gown was covered with black dirt, down the sides marks of greasy paws; I suppose I had many of them on my hoop as I passed through.

Are



Are those the people who send up members?—Are such as those to point out and chuse our senators?—Well—well, I won't quarrel with them, thank God we are safe and well at Nut-Hill. My poor—poor gown is the only mournful thing I see here, it now stares me in the face! I wonder why Drew hung it so near me!

A card I find from Sir John S—, and Mr. A—, a mournful ditty indeed! I am sorry the gentlemen should be so dispirited, I hope it will not prevent them from proceeding in their canvass.—A deal about the two beautiful brides!—Yes, to be sure I was a beautiful creature, I wish they could have seen me stepping from the kennel.

But

But here comes my—if I do call him *husband* upon my word, it is the first time; don't you find, lady Melcombe, something awkward in the sound of *husband*?—One looks so foolish, it gives one such an air of humility. I vow I don't half like it.—My husband does this—and my husband desires I would do so and so.—Yes—yes, I have heard the epithet of *husband* often enough, but I don't know how it is, I think seldom pronounced with grace;—Why is not Frank, or my dear, or Mr. Osborne, just as well?—Come, this goes into my pocket, he is at the door I perceive, my husband, since the duchess will have it so, shall not see I can look like a fool on any occasion.

My

My dear Frank, I am glad you are gone down without me.—Really madam I must confess to you, observe I never told him so, but indeed I cannot avoid telling your ladyship, that I love him more and more;—so sensible—his manners so refined, — such tenderness in his disposition; if dame Fortune would this moment make her appearance, I think I could give her a thousand smiles, and a thousand curtsies, for her valuable present.

We have two strangers just come in,—when Frank told me so, I flew to the glass, not once recollecting every creature was present, in whose eyes I wished to look amiable.—Come—come my love, said he, adjusting my careless locks,



which your ladyship well knows are too apt to fall about my face, you may spare yourself the trouble of dress, the strangers, welcome to every individual, are not persons that require much ceremony. The duchess's Sally and her husband, I exclaimed, am I not right? —Yes, my dearest life, you are right, they now stand with streaming eyes to behold the happiness of their much loved young lady.— I protest I quite shivered with pleasure;—I felt their raptures;— I partook of their extreme joy;— The duke I find, led them to her grace, and Mr. Osborne told me, he saw her put her sweet arms round Sally's neck—Isaac and Sarah, he says, are capering about as if they were their own children, they

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they have been over the house with them, and are now shewing them what they think most worthy of observation without doors. Dear good souls, I must hasten down to see their happy countenances. — The duchess has told your ladyship, I suppose—his grace wrote them the very day of his nuptials, that they must dispose of all their effects in ——shire, and hasten to settle near Castlebrook, in a house he had provided for that purpose; at the same time informed them, a handsome annuity waited their acceptance.

Pray, my lady Melcombe, don't press your odd visitors to exceed their time, we long to have you here;—let us know the day when

intend us that favour, I hope to be the first to bid you welcome.— I charge your ladyship not to come without your good man; I hate to be with people who leave half their happiness at home. When you are at Nut-hill, we must have you all to ourselves, I have no notion of breathing in one place, and living in another.— Remember what I say, and tell Sir Hugh, his new relation ardently wishes to kiss his hand.—The best respects and kindest wishes of all here are united with your ladyship's much obliged and affectionate

S. OSBORNE.



F I N I S.



